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Freemasons. Massachusetts. Grand
REPORT Lodge

ON THE

MASONIC DIFFICULTIES

IN

CANADA,

ADOPTED BY THE

GRAND LODGE OF MASSACHUSETTS,

SEPTEMBER 10, 1856.

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REPORT.

It is doubtless known to the Fraternity generally, that there has been for some time more or less dissatisfaction among our Brethren in Canada, arising out of their peculiar connexion with the Grand Lodges of Great Britain and Ireland. These difficulties would perhaps seem at first sight entirely uninteresting to the Fraternity in the United States; but the slightest reflection manifests so clearly the peculiarly sympathetic character and essence of our Order, that a blow struck at one extremity of the Masonic world, or a difficulty existing anywhere within its limits, is seen to be felt everywhere, and, like a stroke of electricity, vibrates almost at once along the various lines of communication, even to the utmost bounds of our Masonic horizon.

Any irregularity, therefore, either in the government, principles or practices of the Craft; anything in fact which even *seems* to conflict with our "Ancient Landmarks," affects not alone the place of its origin but the whole Fraternity, the world over. Whatever takes place then among our Canadian Brethren is of course interesting to us in proportion to its vicinity; since any irregularity permitted either on their side of the line or ours, is sure sooner or later to cross the boundary; and we shall find in common with them, that it is much easier to prevent such evil than to cure it.

That portion of the Fraternity in Canada under the Grand Lodge of England, is governed by three Provincial Grand Lodges, viz. 1. Montreal and William Henry; 2. Quebec and Three Rivers, and 3. that of the Upper Province. The Provincial Grand Masters are appointed by the Grand Master of England, and retain the English practice of appointing their Deputies, Grand Wardens, and other Officers to a certain extent.

The dues paid by each Lodge to the Mother Grand Lodge are for each Charter or Warrant of Constitution \$25, for each Diploma \$1.50, also a small fee for registering; and these, so far as we know, are all which the G. Lodge of England receives from the Canadian Lodges.

The Grand Lodge of Scotland has only two or three Lodges under her jurisdiction in the Upper Province. She has however a number in the Lower Province, and it appears from the Reports of her Provincial Grand Master there, that all these stand firm in their allegiance.

The amount of fees, or dues, paid to this Grand Lodge, we have no means of ascertaining.

The Grand Lodge of Ireland has about fifteen Lodges, whose fees are \$2.50 annually for each Lodge chartered previous to 1846, and \$5.00 annually for each Lodge chartered since; \$1.50 for each candidate; registering fee sixty cents, and Diploma fifty cents. We allude to these matters of organization and expense merely from their having been brought forward as among the principal causes of dissatisfaction: and their amount becomes therefore a matter of consequence to the argument.

How the Provincial Grand Lodges are supported, or whence the funds are drawn for their support, or what the aggregate expense for this purpose may be, your Committee cannot say.

There has long been a growing dissatisfaction at this state of things, and much discussion has grown out of the constantly deepening conviction that some effort must be made to introduce a better; until at length, almost the entire Craft being convinced that an independent organization was essential to the effective and proper working of the Order, efforts were made from time to time to call the attention of the Grand Lodge of England to these causes of dissatisfaction, in the hope that in some way a remedy might be applied. It is not necessary to detail the history of the various attempts, which were attended with no success until the appointment of Bro. R. H. Townend, as Special Agent to the G. Lodge of England, made at a meeting of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Canada West, held at the Clifton House, Niagara, July 19, 1855. And it is perhaps well to remark, as an evidence of the spirit then prevailing, that a motion was offered which would, if carried, have led to immediate and open rebellion on the part of the Canadian Craft towards the Mother Grand Lodge; this motion, however, the presiding officer very properly refused to put.

Bro. Townend's mission was so far successful that he had got the matter regularly before the Grand Lodge of England; and there seems every reason to believe that all would have been satisfactorily adjusted but for the precipitate action of a portion of our Canadian Brethren, who were unwilling to "wait patiently," as recommended by Bro. Townend. They accordingly called a Convention at Hamilton, Upper Canada, on the 10th of October last, which resulted in the

formation of a new body, declaring itself independent of all former authority. The mission of Brother Townend continued, with still more favorable prospects; but the secession of the 10th of October rendered that which had been done, useless. And, moreover, it appears from a passage in the communication (to be hereafter alluded to) from the new body, that no concession from the Mother Grand Lodge short of absolute and complete independence would have been satisfactory to the seceding Brethren; that principle having been predetermined.

Under these circumstances the Provincial Grand Lodge of Canada West held a meeting on the 23d of October, at which the new body was declared illegal, and all Masonic intercourse with it, was by a unanimous vote strictly forbidden. At a meeting of the Provincial Grand Lodge held on the 26th of May, 1856, a resolution was passed instructing their Board of General Purposes to communicate to the various Grand Lodges with whom they were in communication, the true position of that Grand Lodge, "as regards the movement of the self-styled Grand Lodge of Canada." A report on the subject was accordingly made, of which this Grand Lodge has received a copy, and from which the foregoing account of the difficulties in question has been mainly drawn.

They also at the same meeting, approved of a proposition made, or to be made, to the Grand Lodge of England, by Bro. the Rev. Gec. R. Porter, P. S. G. W., for settling the Canadian difficulties, by a concession of almost complete independence. Whether there have been, or are likely to be, any results from this last proposition, your Committee cannot say.

From the body of Brethren above mentioned, who met at Hamilton on the 10th of October last, this Grand Lodge in common with the other Grand Lodges of the Union has received an able communication, going at length into the history of the transactions which your committee have briefly sketched, detailing their reasons for the step they have taken, and asking our recognition and fraternal sympathy. Their communication states that after the various unsuccessful communications to the Grand Lodge of England, "finding that the interests of the Craft were suffering with increased severity from the causes of which they had complained—feeling deeply the uncourteous neglect the Petitions and Correspondence of the Provincial Grand Lodge had experienced from the officers of the Grand Lodge of England—and believing the Provincial Grand Lodge to be incapable of obtaining the concessions which the position of the Craft rendered indispensable—

it was determined to call a meeting of delegates from all Canadian Lodges, to be held at the city of Hamilton on the 10th of October, to consider the expediency of forming a Grand Lodge of Canada."

Accordingly, the representatives, as they say, of fortyone Lodges, holding under the Grand Lodges of England, Ireland and Scotland, met as requested, and after fully debating all matters in question, agreed with one exception, upon the formation, and proceeded to elect the officers of the Grand Lodge of Canada.

This Communication is signed by Wm. M. Wilson, as Grand Master, and countersigned by Thomas Bird Harris, as Grand Secretary.

It will at once be seen, Brethren, that here is a case almost new in our Masonic experience, involving principles of the highest importance—appealing strongly to our sympathies as freemen—and requiring that prudence and caution whereby we may avoid being led through those sympathies into a course inconsistent with those well tried principles, which have so long secured peace and tranquillity within the borders of this Grand Lodge.

The naked question to be met is briefly as follows, viz. whether it is consistent with the recognized laws or customs of Freemasonry, for any portion of the Lodges under a particular jurisdiction to secede from the Parent Body, without its consent,—and to form of their own authority a new Body, having an independent existence and independent powers.

In discussing this question we must define, if we can, the principles which have always by common consent, governed the relations of the various Grand Lodges of this country with each other, and with Foreign Countries.

And the leading principle is this: That each Grand Lodge in the United States rules and governs without interference from any other, all Lodges within the Civil Jurisdiction of the State in which she is situated,—holding the territories as common ground wherein each Grand Lodge is free to charter Lodges at pleasure; until each Territory by being regularly admitted into the Union as a State, acquires the right to form a Grand Lodge for itself. Your Committee are aware that this has sometimes been done before admission as a State: but, although it may be alleged in excuse that Territories are States in process of formation, we still think the practice illegal, and not to be justified in any case; the only safe rule in our opinion being that above laid down.

The same rule holds good as regards foreign countries; we do not think of chartering Lodges within their limits, if there is a Grand

Lodge there, nor do we permit them to do so within ours. And this is the reason why the recent attempt of the Grand Lodge of Hamburg to violate this well understood principle has been met with such vehement disapproval: although the Lodge chartered by her consisted mainly of foreigners and worked in a foreign language.

With regard to the Lodges of Great Britain and Ireland, the case is exactly analogous to ours. Neither of these Grand Lodges charters Lodges within the bounds of the others, though all do so in the Colonies—just as we do in the Territories.

As to the Continental Grand Lodges, they are governed in many points on principles differing from ours, and which we can scarcely understand. There are for instance, in France, the Grand Lodge of France, and the Supreme Council; both insisting upon equal authority, and not at all, certainly, to the furtherance of harmony. There are three Grand Lodges in Berlin; and perhaps, other, to us, anomalous arrangements, elsewhere. Now we do not say that these things may not be very proper for them, but, that with our principles of Masonic jurisprudence, they would not be proper for us: and that no precedent arising from their peculiar organizations would be safe for us to follow.

We are now called upon to recognize, as a Grand Lodge, a body formed on different principles from our own, which has for certain reasons, good or bad, set up a pretension which amounts to this, viz. that whenever any portion of the Craft under any jurisdiction finds it inconvenient to remain there;—or whenever it imagines itself aggrieved or slighted by the Parent Body, it is right and proper to resort to revolution—to close the doors upon all explanation or concession, and, strictly by its own authority to constitute and maintain a new and independent Jurisdiction, totally disconnected from all former duties or associations.

Such has been the course of the Brethren seeking to be acknowledged as the Grand Lodge of Canada: and in justification of this course they allege substantially the following reasons, viz:—

1st. The want of harmony in action and in working resulting from Lodges hailing from different countries, perpetuating local and national feelings, prejudices, and conflicting interests, &c.

2d. That Lodges in the Provinces are required to contribute to the funds of the Grand Lodge of Great Britain in addition to supporting three Provincial Grand Lodges. The far greater number of applicants for charity being Brethren emigrating from Great Britain, while few or none requiring aid, go from the Provinces to the Mother Country.

3d. The Grand Lodges of Great Britain thus doubly tax the Fraternity in Canada by transferring to their shores numberless claimants for Masonic aid, at the same time they are receiving from them a portion of the means of affording it.

4th. The inconvenience arising from the lengthened periods that must ensue in consequence of the distance between them and Great Britain, before they can receive replies to their communications, sanction to their proceedings, warrants, certificates of membership, &c., sometimes to the great detriment of the Craft, and of individual Brethren; and lastly,

5th. The appointment of their Prov. Grand Masters by the Grand Master of England, who at a distance of near 4000 miles may reasonably be expected to be practically ignorant of their peculiar wants:— and inasmuch as the Provincial Grand Officers are appointed by the Provincial Grand Masters, their propriety necessarily depends upon the Grand Master, who is selected entirely without reference to the opinions of the Brethren in the Provinces. And “the Provincial Grand Lodges thus constituted are placed in the equivocal position of being irresponsible to, and independent of, the Craft in Canada,” &c.

Our Brethren, after stating that their Grand Lodge has been regularly constituted, &c., go on to ground an argument for its necessity from the number of Lodges engaged in forming it, which they say was fortyone, hailing from three different jurisdictions, “while from the time when the four Lodges of London renounced their allegiance to the Grand Lodge of York and formed themselves into an independent Grand Lodge, to the present day, the greatest number of Lodges on record as associating to form a new Grand Lodge, is seventeen.”

It seems to your Committee after examining these several reasons to the best of our ability, that they make out simply cases of inconvenience, and nothing more: want of harmony in working or action is an inconvenience; a multiplicity of Jurisdictions is an inconvenience. It would be better doubtless for the interests of the Craft in the Provinces were their Masonic contributions expended where they are raised: although it would seem from what has been above said, that the amount drawn from the Provinces by the Grand Lodges of Great Britain and Ireland would not, if left there, add very materially to their means of charity. And, since the dues thus paid by them are certainly much below those usually paid in this country, we cannot see any well grounded cause for dissatisfaction upon this point; much less for revolution. It is an inconvenience also that so many Brethren come from Europe requiring assistance; but how the Grand Lodges

of Great Britain or Ireland can be blamed for this—what control they have over it—or how they can be charged with “thus doubly taxing the Craft in Canada,” your Committee cannot perceive.

The inconvenience arising from distance was doubtless in former times very great; but now, when modern improvements have almost annihilated distance—difficulties from this source are certainly not insuperable.

It is an inconvenience certainly—at least we should so consider it, to be governed by a body 4000 miles away; or that they should appoint our principal officers. But as these things are just as they always were among our Canadian Brethren, and, moreover, as a large portion of them would probably insist that the English principle of appointment gives on the whole, better officers to the Fraternity than ours of election—your Committee can see no cause for extreme measures here. And as the Masters, Past Masters and Wardens of Lodges must form a sufficiently effective working majority in the Provincial Grand Lodges—embodying as they certainly must the aggregate will of the Fraternity—we cannot see how these Grand Lodges can properly be said to be “irresponsible to, and independent of the Craft in Canada.”

Our Brethren state in their communication, that fortyone Lodges concurred in the formation of their Grand Lodge; but this does not seem exactly borne out by subsequent information.

It is now said that the actual number of seceding Lodges is twenty-six, viz.: eight from Canada West—three from the Prov. Grand Lodge of Montreal and William Henry, and fifteen from the Grand Lodge of Ireland; leaving fortyfive in the Upper Province, who still remain firm in their allegiance to the Parent Grand Lodge.

The last remark in the communication which it will be necessary for your Committee to notice, is an allusion to the time when, as it says, “the four Lodges of London renounced their allegiance to the Grand Lodge of York and formed themselves into an independent Grand Lodge.” Now it is certain from the old Constitutions that in 1717 the four old Lodges of London with some old Brethren met at the Apple-tree Tavern, in Charles street, Covent Garden, and having put into the Chair the *oldest Master Mason*, being then *Master of a Lodge*, “they constituted themselves a *GRAND LODGE pro tempore in due form*.”

But here is no allusion to any renunciation of allegiance to the Grand Lodge of York, or any mention of such a Grand Lodge,—or any indication that the authority of such a Grand Lodge ever extended over the Lodges in question in any way. A Grand Lodge of York there

certainly was ; but no precedent it seems to us can be drawn for the forcible establishment of a new body from any imagined rebellion against the Grand Lodge of York, by the Lodges of London. The peculiar jurisdiction or mode of operation of this Grand Lodge your Committee do not profess to discuss ; but we do not know that there ever was, any quarrel between it and the Grand Lodge of England.

Your Committee understand that since the receipt by this Grand Lodge of the communication in question, the new Grand Lodge of Canada has been acknowledged by the Grand Lodge of Ireland, and also by two of the Grand Lodges of the United States.

With regard to the first named Body, we feel warranted in saying, that whatever may have been her motives—still, judged by the principles generally recognized by the Masonic World, at least in Great Britain and America,—she has made a mistake ; and therefore her example can be no authority for us. As regards the Grand Lodges of our country, we have no fears that when all the bearings of this most important subject shall be fully understood—they will sanction any thing in the least inconsistent with the well settled, wise, and conservative principles of the Order.

We have thus Brethren, gone over this whole matter with all the lights we could command, and with all the care we could bestow, on a subject of such paramount importance. We have had no need to guard ourselves against prejudice, or excitement, since the gravity of the crisis has secured us from either. We have not sought to impugn men's motives—for we have no doubt the Brethren engaged in this unfortunate movement sincerely believe themselves to be right. And we do not intend to uphold the present organization of the Craft in Canada as the best possible. On the contrary we believe this Grand Lodge will be among the first to welcome any LEGAL arrangements whereby our Canadian Brethren may obtain of their Parent Grand Lodges such a virtual independence as shall secure to them Union, Harmony and Economy.

With these views we cannot recommend to this Grand Lodge the recognition, as a Grand Lodge, of that body of Brethren calling themselves the "Grand Lodge of Canada"—1st. Because being within the bounds of the British Empire,—and for the most part acknowledging the authority of the Grand Lodge of England,—they have violently, and against all Masonic rules, rebelled against and thrown off that authority, without even being able to give in excuse any weighty reason. 2d. Because your Committee believe there can be no possible

valid reason for such a course amongst us. The right of revolution when oppressions become intolerable, has always been recognized by the Anglo Saxon race, from Runnymede to the present day. But in Masonry there is no such necessity: there can be no long continued oppression; for within certain bounds the will of the majority is absolute; and there can be no temptation to tyranny, for nothing is to be gained by it.

We have then every possible incentive to keep *within our own laws, administered by ourselves*; since whatever differences are possible amongst us, they, are abundantly sufficient to settle, easily and amicably.

Again, were we as a Fraternity to recognize this principle of revolution, what is to hinder it from extending everywhere. A few ambitious or discontented Brethren might break up any Grand Lodge, or all Grand Lodges: and there could be no such thing as an irregular Grand Lodge; since any reasonable number of Lodges would on their own reasons, good or bad, have the right to form one, to be recognized of course by all the rest,—and so on till the very name of Masonic authority became a by-word and a mockery.

With the Grand Lodges whose authority has been set at naught in this matter, we have long held Fraternal Communication, our members have interchanged visits for many years, and there has been on all sides, we trust, a true Fraternal sympathy.

But the Grand Lodge of England especially, were this a question of mere courtesy, and not of law, would have every claim upon our sympathy; for we owe her all respect as our own VENERABLE MOTHER. And, never will there be a Grand Lodge while time shall last, whose regular, dignified, and in every way truly Masonic spirit, can cast upon an admiring Fraternity a brighter, purer light, than hers.

Under these circumstances your Committee recommend the adoption of the following Resolutions, viz:—

In Grand Lodge, Boston, Sept. 10th, 1856.

Whereas a Communication has been received by this Grand Lodge from a number of Brethren in Canada, legally under the Jurisdiction, (for the most part) of the Grand Lodge of England, styling themselves the Grand Lodge of Canada, and asking our recognition as such—therefore

Resolved, That the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts feels itself compelled to refuse the recognition asked for, and to protest against the

continuance of any such Body, it being in our view, an act of rebellion against a sister Grand Lodge.

Resolved, That the Lodges and individual Brethren under this Jurisdiction are hereby strictly forbidden to hold any Masonic Communication with said illegal Body, or with any Lodge or any individual having any connexion therewith.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

GEO. G. SMITH.
SIMON W. ROBINSON.
LUCIUS R. PAIGE.
JOHN T. HEARD.
JOHN H. SHEPPARD.
W. D. COOLIDGE.

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